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Lorne Greene

Lorne Hyman Greene[1] OC (born **Lyon Himan Green**;[2] 12 February 1915 – 11 September 1987) was a Canadian actor, musician, singer and radio personality. His notable television roles include Ben Cartwright on the Western *Bonanza* and Commander Adama in the original science-fiction television series *Battlestar Galactica* and *Galactica 1980*. He also worked on the Canadian television nature documentary series *Lorne Greene's New Wilderness* and in television commercials.

Early life and career in Canada

Greene was born Lyon Himan Green in Ottawa, Ontario,[2] to Jewish immigrants from the Russian Empire, Dora (née Grinovsky) and Daniel Green, a shoemaker.[3] He was called "Chaim" by his mother, and his name is shown as "Hyman" on his school report cards. In a biography of him, written by his daughter Linda Greene Bennett, she wrote that it was unknown when he began using the name Lorne, nor when he added an "e" to Green.[2]

Greene was the drama instructor at Camp Arowhon, a summer camp in Algonquin Park, Ontario, Canada, where he developed his talents.

Greene began acting while attending Queen's University in Kingston, where he acquired a knack for broadcasting with the Radio Workshop of the university's Drama Guild on the campus radio station CFRC.

He gave up on a career in chemical engineering, and upon graduation, found a job as a radio broadcaster for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).

During World War II, Greene served as a Flying officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Afterward, he was assigned as the principal newsreader on the CBC National News, with CBC gave him the nickname "The Voice of Canada". However, following Canada's entry into World War II in 1939, his role in delivering distressing war news in sonorous tones with his deep, resonant voice caused many listeners to call him "The Voice of Doom", especially as he was delegated the dreaded list of soldiers killed in the war.

Lorne Greene

Greene in 1969

Born	Lyon Himan Green 12 February 1915 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Died	11 September 1987 (aged 72) Santa Monica, California, U.S.
Other names	Chaim Green Lorne Hyman Greene
Occupations	Actor · musician · radio personality · singer
Years active	1939–1987
Spouses	Rita Hands (m. 1938; div. 1960) Nancy Deale (m. 1961)
Children	3
Relatives	Sam Raimi (son-in-law)

During his radio days, Greene invented a stopwatch which ran backwards (i.e. it would start from a given number and count down to zero);[4] this helped radio announcers gauge how much time was left while speaking.

During his CBC radio career, Greene also narrated documentary films, such as the National Film Board of Canada's *Fighting Norway* (1943).

Greene left the CBC and became a freelancer after the war when the network ordered staff announcers to turn over a large percentage of any income they earned from film narration. Greene continued to appear on CBC on a freelance basis while becoming the newsreader for private radio station CKEY in Toronto, while also returning to acting work both on stage and in radio plays.[5]

After closing his Academy of Radio Arts in 1952, Greene relocated to the United States. Katharine Cornell cast him twice in her Broadway productions. In 1953, he was cast in *The Prescott Proposals.* In that same year, she cast him in a verse drama by Christopher Fry, *The Dark is Light Enough.* Greene likewise began appearing in isolated episodes on live television in the 1950s. In 1953, he was seen in the title role of a one-hour adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello*. In 1954, he made his Hollywood debut as Saint Peter in *The Silver Chalice* and made several more films and appearances on American television. In 1955, he starred in the British Canadian TV series *Sailor of Fortune*. In 1955, he was Ludwig van Beethoven in an episode of the TV version of *You Are There*, and also appeared as Marcus Brutus in *Julius Caesar* at the Stratford Festival.[6] In 1957, Greene played the prosecutor in *Peyton Place*.

American television

Greene as Ben Cartwright (1959)

The first of his continuing TV roles was as the patriarch Ben "Pa" Cartwright in *Bonanza*, the first one-hour Western series filmed in colour (1959–1973), making Greene a household name. He garnered the role after his performance as O'Brien in the CBS production of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

In the 1960s, Greene capitalized on his image as Ben Cartwright by recording several albums of country-western/folk songs, which Greene performed in a mixture of spoken word and singing. In 1964, Greene had a number-one single on the music charts with his spoken-word ballad, "Ringo" (which referred to the real-life Old West outlaw Johnny Ringo), and got play time from "Saga of the Ponderosa", which detailed the Cartwright founding of the famous ranch.

In 1973, after the cancellation of *Bonanza* following a 14-year run, Greene joined Ben Murphy in the ABC crime drama, *Griff*, about a Los Angeles, California, police officer, Wade "Griff" Griffin, who retires to become a private detective. When it failed to gain sufficient ratings and was cancelled after 13 episodes, Greene thereafter hosted the syndicated nature documentary series *Last of the Wild* from 1974 to 1975.[7]

In the 1977 miniseries *Roots*, he played the first master of Kunta Kinte, John Reynolds. Through the 1970s, Greene was the spokesman for Alpo Beef Chunks dog food commercials, one of the possible origins of the phrase "Eating your own dog food".

In 2007, *TV Guide* listed Ben Cartwright as the nation's second-most popular TV father (behind Cliff Huxtable). Greene was also known for his role as Commander Adama, another patriarchal figure, in the science-fiction television series *Battlestar Galactica* (1978–1979) and *Galactica 1980* (1980). Greene's typecasting as a wise father character continued with the 1981 series *Code Red* as a fire-department chief, whose command includes his children as subordinates. Greene appeared with his former *Bonanza* co-star Michael Landon on an episode of *Highway to Heaven*. Greene also appeared with his former *Bonanza* co-star Pernell Roberts on a two-part episode of *Vega$*.

Greene's Ponderosa II House in Mesa, Arizona

He appeared in the HBO mockumentary *The Canadian Conspiracy*, about the supposed subversion of the United States by Canadian-born media personalities. For nearly a decade, Greene co-hosted the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on NBC with Betty White.

Back on Canadian television

In the 1980s, Greene devoted his energies to wildlife and environmental issues, including hosting and narrating the CTV's nature series *Lorne Greene's New Wilderness*, a show which promoted environmental awareness.[8]

Personal life

Greene was married twice, first to Rita Hands of Toronto (1938–1960, divorced). Some reports list the start of their marriage as 1940. They had two children, twins born in 1945: Charles and Belinda Susan. His second wife was Nancy Deale (1961–1987, Greene's death), with whom he had one child, Gillian Dania Greene, who is married to director Sam Raimi.

The Ponderosa II House was built by Greene in 1960 in Mesa, Arizona. It is located at 602 S. Edgewater Drive. It is a replica of the Bonanza set house from the former Ponderosa Ranch in Incline Village, Nevada. It is listed in the Mesa Historic Property Register.[9]

Death

Greene died on 11 September 1987, aged 72, from complications from pneumonia, following ulcer surgery, at Saint Johns' Hospital in Santa Monica, California.[10] He was interred at Hillside Memorial Park Cemetery in Culver City.[11]

Honours and awards

Greene was made an Officer of the Order of Canada on 28 October 1969, "for services to the Performing Arts and to the community."[12]

Greene was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree by his alma mater, Queen's University, in 1971.[13] He was the 1987 recipient of the Earle Grey Award for Lifetime Achievement at the Canadian Gemini Awards. He has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 1559 N. Vine Street.

In 1974, Greene received the Golden Plate Award of the American Academy of Achievement.[14]

In February 1985, Greene was the Krewe of Bacchus King of Mardi Gras.[15]

In May 2006, Greene became one of the first of four entertainers to ever be honoured by Canada Post by being featured on a 51-cent postage stamp.[16]

Greene was inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame, found on King Street and Simcoe Street in Toronto, in 2015.[17]

Lorne Greene Academy of Radio Arts

Greene founded and was dean of the Lorne Greene Academy of Radio Arts in Toronto in 1945, which trained a number of future broadcasters and actors including Leslie Nielsen, James Doohan, Les Rubie, Gordie Tapp, Fred Davis, Billie Mae Richards, William Davidson, Alfie Scopp, Murray Chercover, Jonathan Frid, Cec Linder, Les Lye, Bill Luxton, Roy Currie. The school was located on Jarvis Street across from what was then the CBC Radio building. Its faculty included many CBC staff such as Mavor Moore, Fletcher Markle, Lister Sinclair, Andrew Allan, and Esse Ljungh, and graduated a total of 381 students in seven years, 90% of whom found work in the industry. Though successful academically, the school continually lost money, resulting in Greene closing the school in 1952, allowing him to sell the building to recoup his losses.[18][19][20][21][22]

Filmography

- *Churchill's Island* (1941) as narrator
- *Warclouds in the Pacific* (1941) as narrator
- *Inside Fighting China* (1941) as narrator
- *Flight 6* (1944) as narrator
- *Othello* (1953) (television) as Othello
- *1984* (short film, 1953) as O'Brien
- *The Philip Morris Playhouse* (one episode, 1953) as Joe
- *Omnibus* (one episode, 1953) as Ed Bailey
- *Danger* (one episode, 1954) as Stranger
- *The Silver Chalice* (1954) as Saint Peter
- *Justice* (one episode, 1954, "The Desperate One")
- *You Are There* (three episodes, 1954–1955) as Ludwig van Beethoven / Charles Stewart Parnell
- *Tight Spot* (1955) as Benjamin Costain
- *Climax!* (one episode, 1955) as Dr. Charles Saunders
- *The Elgin Hour* (one episode, 1955) as Vernon Dyall
- *Studio 57* (one episode, 1955) as Gentry Morton
- *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (Season 1 Episode 27 "Help Wanted", 1956) as Mr. X
- *Autumn Leaves* (1956) as Mr. Hanson
- *The Alcoa Hour* (one episode, 1956) as Sheriff Gash
- *Armstrong Circle Theatre* (one episode, 1956) as Angelina
- *The United States Steel Hour* (one episode, 1956) as Dallas
- *Kraft Television Theatre* (one episode, 1957) as Colonel Matthews
- *Playhouse 90* (one episode, 1957) as Lowell Williams
- *Studio One* (five episodes, 1953–1957)

- *Peyton Place* (1957) as Prosecutor
- *The Hard Man* (1957) as Rice Martin
- *The Gift of Love* (1958) as Grant Allan
- *Suspicion* (one episode, 1958) as Monty
- *The Last of the Fast Guns* (1958) as Michael O'Reilly
- *Shirley Temple's Storybook* (one episode, 1958) as King Bertrand
- *The Buccaneer* (1958) as Mercier
- *The Trap* (1959) as Davis
- *Bonanza* (417 episodes, 1959–1973) as Ben Cartwright
- *The Third Man* (one episode, 1959)
- *The Gale Storm Show* (one episode, 1959) as Constable Barnaby
- *The Hangman* (1959) as Marshal Clum Cummings
- *Mike Hammer* (two episodes, 1959) as Carl Kunard, Emmett Gates
- *Bronco* (one episode, 1959) as Capt. Amos Carr
- *Wagon Train* (one episode, 1959) as Christopher Webb
- *Cheyenne* (two episodes, 1960) as Colonel Bell
- *The Errand Boy* (1961) as Ben Cartwright – Cameo (uncredited)
- *The Legend of Amaluk: An Arctic Odyssey* (1972) as narrator
- *Griff* (12 episodes, 1973–1974) as Wade Griffin
- *Earthquake* (1974) as Sam Royce
- *Tidal Wave* (1973) as Ambassador Warren Richards (1975 US Version only)
- *Nevada Smith* (1975) as Jonas Cord
- *The Moneychangers* (1976) as George Quartermain
- *Roots* (two episodes, 1977) as John Reynolds
- *SST: Death Flight* (1977) as Marshall Cole
- *The Hardy Boys/Nancy Drew Mysteries* (two episodes, 1977) as Inspector Hans Stavlin
- *The Trial of Lee Harvey Oswald* (1977) as Matthew Arnold Watson
- *Yabba Dabba Doo! The Happy World of Hanna-Barbera* (1977) as Special Guest
- *Happy Days* (1977) as Special Guest Cameo
- *The Bastard* (1978) as Bishop Francis
- *Battlestar Galactica* (21 episodes, 1978–1979) as Commander Adama
- *The Love Boat* (three episodes, 1979–1982) as Buck Hamilton / Buddy Bowers
- *Klondike Fever* (1980) as Sam Steele
- *Galactica 1980* (10 episodes, 1980) as Commander Adama
- *Living Legend: The King of Rock and Roll* (1980)
- *Pink Lady* (one episode, 1980) as himself
- *Vega$* (two episodes, 1980) as Emil Remick
- *A Time for Miracles* (1980) as Bishop John Carroll
- *Aloha Paradise* (one episode, 1981) as Businessman
- *The Wizard of Oz* (1982) as The Wizard (voice)
- *Code Red* (12 episodes, 1981–1982) as Battalion Chief Joe Rorchek
- *Police Squad!* (one episode, 1982) as Stabbed Man
- *Heidi's Song* (1982) as Grandfather (voice)
- *Lorne Greene's New Wilderness* (104 episodes, 1982–1987) as Host / Narrator
- *The Nutcracker: A Fantasy on Ice* (1983) as himself / narrator[23]

- *Highway to Heaven* (one episode, 1985) as Fred Fusco
- *The Greatest Adventure: Stories from the Bible* (1986) as Noah (voice)
- *Vasectomy: A Delicate Matter* (1986) as Theo Marshall
- *The Alamo: Thirteen Days to Glory* (1987) as General Sam Houston (final film role)

Discography

Albums

Year	Album	US	Label
1961	*Robin Hood of El Dorado*	—	MGM
1962	*Bonanza Ponderosa Party Time*	—	RCA
1963	*Young at Heart*	—	
	Christmas on the Ponderosa	—	
1964	*Peter and the Wolf*	—	
	Welcome to the Ponderosa	35	
1965	*The Man*	—	
	American West	—	
	Have a Happy Holiday	54	
1966	*Portrait of the West*	—	

Singles

Year	Single	Chart Positions					Album
		CAN Country	CAN Pop	US [24]	US Country	US AC	
1962	"My Sons My Sons"	—	—	—	—	—	*Bonanza Ponderosa Party Time*
1963	"I'm the Same Ole Me"	—	—	—	—	—	single only
1964	"Ringo"	—	1	1	21	1	*Welcome to the Ponderosa*
1965	"The Man"	3	—	72	—	—	*The Man*
	"Ol' Tin Cup"	—	—	—	—	—	*Welcome to the Ponderosa*
1966	"Five Card Stud"	—	—	112	—	—	*American West*
	"Daddy's Little Girl"	—	—	—	—	—	singles only
	"Waco"	—	—	—	50	—	
1969	"It's All in the Game"	—	—	—	—	—	
1970	"Daddy (I'm Proud to Be Your Son)"	—	—	—	—	—	
	"First Word"	—	—	—	—	—	

1976	"Spirit of America"	—	—	—	—	—	

See also

Biography portal
Canada portal
Music portal
Television portal

- Canadian pioneers in early Hollywood
- Western (genre)

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